

**MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AIR AND LAND PROTECTION DIVISION
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM
Standard Operating Procedures**

SOP #: MDNR-FSS-004 EFFECTIVE DATE: August 15, 2003

SOP TITLE: Field Documentation

WRITTEN BY: Eric Sappington, Environmental Specialist IV, Field Services Section, ESP

APPROVED BY: Earl Pabst, Director, ESP

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: Minor changes were made to Sections 1.0, 2.2, 2.4 and 2.6

APPLICABILITY: This SOP is applicable to all ESP field personnel who use a field notebook to document field activities.

DISTRIBUTION: MoDNR Intranet
ESP SOP Coordinator

RECERTIFICATION RECORD:

Date Reviewed				
Initials				

1.0 SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides guidance in using a field notebook for official documentation purposes when conducting field investigations or other field activities. The information contained within this SOP is applicable to all ESP field staff within the Field Services Section, Environmental Emergency Response Section and Water Quality Monitoring Section.

2.0 PROCEDURE

2.1 A bound field notebook with numbered pages will be provided to all ESP personnel who conduct fieldwork. A bound field notebook with numbered pages is used so that pages cannot be added or removed without it being apparent that an alteration has occurred. Field notebooks are available with either regular paper or all-weather "Rite-in-the-Rain" paper. Personnel should carry a notebook at all times while in the field. All information documented in a field notebook becomes a permanent record for the agency. The following information should be printed on the inside cover of the notebook in permanent ink.

- Employee's name
- Agency name, address, and phone number

The information listed above is important in documenting the user of the notebook and will provide return information in the event the notebook is lost and subsequently found.

2.2 Using permanent black or blue ink, an entry should be made in the field notebook for each day spent in the field. The entry should, at a minimum, include the date, location, name of all participants, and a full description of the field activities. Other information pertinent to a field investigation and typically recorded in a field notebook include:

- Time of arrival and departure for a site or activity
- Weather conditions
- Instrument calibration procedures
- Sampling methodology
- Statements made by responsible parties, suspects, or witnesses that are deemed pertinent to an investigation
- Any general observations that may help describe site conditions
- Field measurements or other analytical data gathered in the field
- Sample characteristics (e.g., color, odor, appearance, etc.)
- Site sketches/maps showing north arrow, scale, sampling locations, landmarks, etc.
- Recording the use of personnel monitoring devices such as radiation dosimetry badges

Personnel are encouraged to write as many notes as necessary that will assist in writing a report at a later date. Staff should be aware that information contained in a field notebook may be subject to a subpoena and used as evidence in court. An effort should be made to write legibly so that others can read the field notes. Most field notes should be written in the field while the activities are taking place, when the information is fresh in the mind of the field staff. At times, it may also be beneficial to record additional information in the field notebook after leaving the site (i.e., back at the office).

- 2.3 If a mistake is made that requires correction, then a single line should be drawn through the mistake so that the words remain legible. Entries should never be blacked out, whited out, or torn out of the book.
- 2.4 It is recommended that staff use a new notebook either at the beginning of each calendar year or each state fiscal year, regardless of how full the notebook may be. However, staff may opt to change to a new notebook more often than each year, or may choose to use a notebook exclusively for a particular site or project. The reason for switching to a new notebook at least once each year is to limit the amount of original evidence that would be lost if a notebook were lost or destroyed. On the exterior of the notebook, either on the spine or the front cover, the user should write the time period covered within the notebook (e.g., 2002 or FY 2003) and the site or project name, if applicable. This makes it easier to catalog and identify the notebook.
- 2.5 When an employee leaves the agency, field notebooks and other pertinent documents must be given to the employee's supervisor. The documentation will be retained by the agency for future reference and evidence.
- 2.6 Other types of field documentation may include specialty forms (e.g., drum logs or well logs), tape recordings, photographs, and videotape. A Field Sheet and Chain-of-Custody Record is used specifically to document sample collection information (refer to MDNR-FSS-002). These additional methods of field documentation are used to supplement the information recorded in a field notebook.

3.0 REFERENCES

- MDNR-FSS-002 *Field Sheet and Chain-of-Custody Record*